OLIA Position on Dock De-Icers

The Oquaga Lake Improvement Association, Inc.

Background: The OLIA has observed an increase in the use of mechanical/electrical devices that prevents ice from freezing around docks. If not properly managed or installed, these devices can create safety hazards during winter months and can contribute to Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in summer months. Therefore, the OLIA finds it necessary to take efforts to ensure proper use of dock de-icers.

TYPES OF DE-ICERS

Bubbler: This device works by releasing small air bubbles from a submerged perforated hose(s) powered by an air compressor typically located on your dock or inside a boathouse.

Agitator/ Circulator: This device works by circulating the water near the lake bottom toward the surface. The entire device is submerged in the water and contain a fair amount of lubricating oil that can leak directly into the water from failed seals.

Both types of devices need to be properly designed and used with a timer and thermostat to limit the amount of open water.

OLIA POSITION

- OLIA discourages the use of dock de-icers in an effort to preserve winter recreational use of the lake and to eliminate actions that contribute to HABs.
- OLIA has requested the Town to establish a local law requiring a permit to operate dock de-icers.
- If used, OLIA recommends the following conditions:
  - De-icers must be a bubbler type only.
  - De-icers must be controlled with a thermostat and timer such that operation only occurs during freezing temperatures.
  - Open water must not extend more than 5 feet from the target dock.
  - Signs must be prominently placed indicating “Danger, Thin Ice”

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF DE-ICERS

- Many de-icing devices open too large an area causing dock damage by allowing ice floes more room to accelerate in windy conditions and **do not guarantee less ice damage.**
- Lake water temperature and light conditions are altered which may impact algae and plant growth, and alter feeding habits of fish and other aquatic organisms.
- De-icers can disturb bottom sediments releasing nutrients such as phosphorus, increasing algae.
- Large areas of open water are a safety hazard and can significantly reduce or prohibit winter recreation opportunities.
- Large areas of open water allow nuisance waterfowl to overwinter on the lake and negatively impact water quality.
- De-icers are noisy.
- These impacts are compounded when many de-icing devices are in use around the lake.